

STATE OF ALASKA
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

DIVISION OF FORESTRY

Northern Southeast Area
COASTAL REGION

FOREST LAND USE PLAN/PRELIMINARY DECISION

for the

WEST HERMAN TIMBER SALE

SE 765 H

ADL 106964

February 2003

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Purpose: The purpose of this Forest Land Use Plan (FLUP) is to provide sufficient information to reviewers to ensure that the best interest of the state will be served by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Division of Forestry, Haines Area, offering for sale an estimated 2,400 thousand board feet (MBF) of timber. The estimated volume consists of spruce and hemlock sawlog and utility log volume. The timber will be sold in 4 or 5 adjoining units over a three or four-year period by sealed competitive bid or by negotiated sale to a purchaser that will process the timber in state. The initial sale will consist of 594 MBF of timber. The initial sale estimated volume consists of approximately 52 MBF of spruce sawlog and utility log volume and 542 MBF of hemlock sawlog and utility log volume.

This timber will be harvested using a clear-cut silvicultural system. Four or five harvest units totaling approximately 95 acres will comprise the sale. The contracts will run for one to three years. The first sale will consist of one clear-cut harvest unit totaling 23 acres.

The public is invited to comment on any aspect of these proposed timber sales with regards to the AS 38.05.035 decision. Comments should be mailed to the Division of Forestry, P.O. Box 263, Haines, Alaska 99827. Comments must be received at the Division of Forestry no later than **March 28, 2003** in order to be considered in the Final Decision of whether the sale will be held in whole or in part. To be eligible to appeal the final decision, a person must have provided written comment by **March 28, 2003**.

- B. Alaska Coastal Management Program (ACMP) Consistency: One purpose of this document is to provide sufficient information to reviewers to evaluate whether this project is consistent with the ACMP. DNR believes the activity described in this FLUP is consistent with ACMP. See Section VII for DNR's consistency analysis.

Pursuant to AS 46.40.096(d)(1), I am requesting consistency review comments from state resource agencies, citizens of the affected coastal district, affected coastal districts, and other interested parties. Your comments, particularly on the proposed timber sale's consistency with the affected local coastal district management program, are requested. To be considered, written comments must be submitted to the Division of Forestry, P.O. Box 263, Haines, AK 99827 on or before **March 15, 2003**. Comments regarding the inconsistency with an affected coastal district's enforceable policy or a state standard set in 6 AAC 80.40 – 6 AAC 80.150 must identify the enforceable policy or standard and explain how the timber sale is inconsistent.

- C. Five-Year Forest Management Schedule: These sales have been listed in the previous two Five-Year Forest Management Schedules (FYFMS). In the schedule for 2001 to 2005 it was listed as the West Herman Sale harvesting approximately 20 acres. In the schedule for 2002 to 2006 and in the current schedule for 2003 to 2007 it is listed as West Herman 1 to West Herman IV harvesting approximately 95 acres in years one (2003) through 4 (2006).
- D. Location: These timber sales are located in the Klehini River drainage near Porcupine and are approximately 30 miles west northwest of Haines, Alaska (see attached map). The legal description of this proposed action is as follows:

Within portions of Section 26, T28S, R54E, Copper River Meridian. The action is within the boundaries of the Haines State Forest Resource Management Area. These sales are located within the Haines Borough and are outside the boundaries of the City of Haines Coastal Management Program. The regional native corporation is the Sealaska Native Corporation. Klukwan is the nearest community, and is located about eleven miles east of the sale. The sale area can be found on the United States Geological Service 1:63,360 Quadrangle map titled Skagway B-4.

- E. Title, Classification and Other Active or Pending Interests:
The sale area is located on general grant lands within the Haines State Forest. These lands were at one time part of the Original Mental Health Land Trust. A court settlement approved on December 6, 1994 removed these lands from the Mental Health Trust and reclassified them as general grant lands. This land is subject to the Haines State Forest Management Plan (HSFMP). This sale lies within subunits 3d and 3f of Management Unit number 3, Klehini River, of the HSFMP. Subunit 3d is classified fish & wildlife habitat and is to be managed primarily for fish & wildlife habitat. Management guidelines allow small commercial timber sales less than 20 acres. The total sale acreage from within this subunit is 20 acres. Subunit 3f is classified Forestland and is to be managed for timber production. The total sale acreage within this subunit is 75 acres. This action is consistent with the guidelines established in the HSFMP.

F. Objectives:

1. To follow DNR's constitutional mandate to encourage the development of the State's renewable resources, making them available for maximum use consistent with the public interest. Sustain and promote a healthy, long-term timber industry in the state, through providing a secure source of timber for harvest that produces raw materials for local manufacturing plants (e.g., mills) while protecting other resources such as fish and wildlife. The actions authorized under this action will follow the constitutional mandate of sustained yield and shall adhere to multiple use management.

2. To help the State economy by providing royalties in the form of stumpage receipts, as well as contributions to local economies through wages, purchases, jobs and business.
3. To improve forest growth and vigor by harvesting and replacing mature stands with new healthy regenerating stands, while protecting and maintaining other resource values. The actions authorized under this decision will follow the constitutional mandate of sustained yield and shall adhere to multiple use management as described in the HSFMP

II. **LEGAL AUTHORITY**

The department is taking this action under the authority of AS 38.05.035(e) (Best Interest Finding); AS 38.05.110-120; 11 AAC 71 (Timber Sale Statutes and Regulations); AS 41.17.010-.950 and 11 AAC 95 (Forest Resources and Practices Statutes and Regulations); AS 46.40; 6 AAC 80 (Alaska Coastal Management Statutes and Regulations).

III. **ADMINISTRATIVE RECORD**

Case File ADL 106964 and the Haines State Forest Management Plan constitute the administrative record for this finding.

IV. **DISCUSSION OF ISSUES**

A. **BACKGROUND**

Topography: The sales are situated on broken ground ranging from generally gentle slopes along the north side climbing to 70% plus slopes along the south edge. General slopes average 40% and range from 0 to 70% with a few steep pitches. A pitch is generally described as a slope of ground less than 200 feet in length. This area generally faces north. The elevation of the sale area is from 500 to 1100 feet above sea level.

Soils: Soils in the sale area are classified as a Kupreanof-Foad Complex and a Tolstoi-Foad Complex. The Kupreanof-Foad Complex soil types are characterized by a shallow organic layer of approximately 2 inches. Soil depth is moderately deep (20-40") to very deep (40-60") and well drained. The mineral surface is silt loam with the subsoil a gravelly sandy loam. The substratum is a very cobbly sandy loam. The Tolstoi-Foad Complex soil types are characterized by a shallow organic layer of approximately 5 inches. Soil depths are shallow (14-20") to moderately deep (20-40") and well drained. The mineral surface is a silt loam with the subsoil a cobbly silt loam and in some places a schist bedrock at 20".

No caves or cave features were found during the timber cruise of the sale.

Water bodies: The Klehini River is an anadromous stream and flows along the north edge of the sale area. The harvest units are more than 200 feet distance from the River. The only other water bodies in this proposed sale area are small intermittent flows that move towards the Klehini River. These flows are primarily due to snowmelt runoff or heavy rain events. There are no other wetlands or riparian vegetation that impact the design and/or layout of this proposed sale.

Stand Conditions: The existing stand is a dominantly western hemlock stand with some Sitka spruce and black cottonwood mixed in. This stand is predominantly an even-age stand approximately 200 years old. There are approximately 50 hemlock trees and 204 square feet of basal area per acre. Average hemlock size is 27 inches DBH (diameter breast high). There are approximately 3 spruce trees and 12 square feet of basal area per acre. Average spruce size is 30 inches DBH. The understory consists of shrub species such as devils club, blueberry, rusty menziesia and other smaller shrubs and forbs.

Wildlife: Some moose and bear sign was noted during the timber cruise of the area. In addition to moose and bear, the area may support the following species of wildlife; marten, lynx, wolverine, wolf, porcupine, squirrel, various birds and other small woods mammals. There is no evidence of high-density bear use within this proposed area. There are no known raptor nests within the proposed sale area and the area has not been identified as important winter range for moose or goats. The HSFMP in a strategy to minimize the impacts of harvest on wildlife prohibits timber harvest on about 17,728 acres of commercial old growth timber. It further spreads the harvest of the remaining 38,221 acres of commercial timber over a relatively long period of time. In addition, 12,197 acres of inoperable or inaccessible timber and the 49,000 acre Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve will not be harvested.

Recreation: The Sunshine Mountain and Porcupine area logging roads receive extensive use by recreationists for hunting, berry picking, hiking, snowmobiling, skiing, dog mushing, wildlife viewing and sight seeing. Most of this use is limited to the road corridors. There are no known recreational trails within the general vicinity of this proposed sale. There are no airplane access points within the proposed sale area. This area is not known to have unique tourism values. There are no known commercial recreation operations that use the Porcupine or Sunshine Mountain road system. All terrain vehicle (ATV) use of this area is not known.

Cultural: No evidence of any cultural or historic features was found within the sale area by Forestry staff. During the course of activities associated with this timber sale, cultural and/or paleontological resources may be inadvertently discovered. Should such discovery occur. These sites shall be protected from disturbance accordingly and the Office of History and Archaeology will be contacted immediately so that compliance with state laws governing cultural resources may begin.

Under the Alaska Historic Preservation Act (41.35.200), all burials on state land are protected. If burials or human remains are found, all land altering activities that would

disturb the burial or remains shall cease and measures will be taken to protect it in place. The Office of History and Archaeology and a law enforcement officer will be notified immediately to ensure that proper procedures for dealing with human remains are followed.

Scenic: The harvest area may be visible from the Haines highway. The distance of $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile should help mitigate the effect on the visual quality of the highway travelers. A buffer will be left along the Porcupine road and roadside vegetation along the highway should also provide screening of the harvest area. The unit will "green up" within a year following harvest as new shrubs and forbs begin to grow from the increased heat and sunlight on the forest floor.

Land Use: There are presently no other permitted land uses in the proposed area. No agricultural use or grazing is known to occur. Traditional use areas may exist but the sale will not adversely impact these uses. The affected watersheds will continue to be managed according to the land use designation found in the HSFMP.

Current Land Use: Currently, the public lands adjacent to this proposed sale area are being managed for timber, recreation, and fish & wildlife habitat.

Transportation: Main access is by the Little Salmon Road; to the Sunshine Mountain Road; to the Porcupine Road; to the spur road into the sale area. The Porcupine Road accesses the sale area more directly but is presently not suitable for log truck traffic. These roads are on general grant lands and University of Alaska lands and are public use access roads.

B. EFFECTS ON WILDLIFE

The effects of the proposed timber sale on wildlife will vary depending on species. Species that prefer early succession vegetation will likely benefit for a period of time. Non-winter browse production may be increased for a period of years after harvest from the increased heat and sunlight that the openings will provide. Early succession vegetation is valuable for moose browse in summer and low-snow winters. The retention of adjacent unharvested stands will provide cover, winter forage, and protection from deep snow, travel corridors and escape cover. As the new stand develops, in 30 to 40 years spruce and hemlock will occupy the site, shading out some portion of the understory so the initial benefits of increased browse production may be reduced. Adjacent areas will be harvested in a timely manner providing increased browse which will accommodate the change in forest vegetation composition. The HSFMP intends to create a mosaic of stands in different age classes to provide benefits to many different species of wildlife. Logging is expected to have few direct impacts on the wildlife populations. Harvesting activities may displace animals temporarily.

Impacts on the bear population are anticipated to be low. Bears may benefit from the increase in early succession vegetation following timber harvest as well. Wintertime

forage and shelter is not a major concern for bears due to hibernation. Their welfare is traditionally most threatened by habitat conversion and improved hunter access. There is anticipated to be some impact to the population through habitat conversion. Harvesting activities may displace animals temporarily.

C. EFFECTS ON FISHERIES

The proposed harvest is anticipated to have minimal impacts on fisheries. The Klehini River flows adjacent to the north side of the sale area and is an anadromous river. The harvest units are all outside of the 100 foot no harvest buffer required by the Haines State Forest Management Plan and Forest Practices Act. A portion of the harvest unit on the east end may fall within 300 feet of the flood plain of the Klehini but is no closer than 200 feet. This area is within the special management zone for the Klehini River. Fish & Game will be consulted to assure that the buffer provided is sufficient to maintain anadromous habitat. The timber sales are anticipated to have a minimal impact on water quality, due to sale design and implementation of the Alaska Forest Resource Practices BMPs during operations. The small water quality streams crossed by the access road will be protected by standard best management practices of road construction.

D. EFFECTS ON SUBSISTENCE

The subject area has not been designated as a subsistence zone. This action is anticipated to have no deleterious effects on subsistence activities.

E. EFFECTS ON RECREATION

DNR expects the following recreation uses in the sale area: hunting, gathering activities, hiking, snowmobiling, skiing, dog mushing, wildlife viewing and sightseeing. This timber sale will provide for continued recreational access into this area as roads will be maintained.

F. SUSTAINED YIELD/ALLOWABLE CUT

The Forest Resources and Practices Act (AS 41.17.060 (c)) and Article VII Section 4 of the State Constitution require that State Forest land be managed on a sustained yield basis. Sustained yield has been defined in the Forest Resources and Practices Act AS 41.17.950(15):

"Sustained Yield" means the achievement and maintenance in perpetuity of a high level of annual or regular periodic output of the various renewable resources of forestland and water without significant impairment of the productivity of the land and water, but does not require that timber be harvested in a non-declining yield basis over a rotation period.

The allowable harvest for the Haines State Forest has been determined to be 58.8 million board feet (MMBF) per decade. Over the past decade, from January 1, 1993 through December 31, 2002, 39.3 MMBF of timber have been harvested from the Haines State Forest or about 67% of the allowable harvest. This sale will contribute to the allowable harvest volume.

G. REGENERATION

The sale area will be harvested in multiple entries using a clear-cut silvicultural system. The clear-cut harvest units will total 95 acres when completed over the three or four year period. Due to the availability of seed trees after harvesting, there should be sufficient seed to establish a new crop naturally. Hemlock in the understory is expected to respond to the increased heat and sunlight and to add to the future stand. To ensure adequate regeneration, the state may plant Sitka spruce in the harvest area. It is expected that the species composition of the future stand will contain a mix of hemlock and spruce.

H. HARVEST METHODS

The silvicultural prescription is clear-cutting. Harvesting will be a combination of cable and track vehicle equipment. Cable yarding will be required on all slopes greater than 30% slope. There should be sufficient soil disturbance to make a good seed bed for natural regeneration.

I. EROSION

There are two soil erosion concerns - surface erosion and mass wasting of soil and debris. Surface erosion is primarily caused by road construction. Surface erosion will be minimized by strict adherence to the contract guidelines and Forest Resources and Practices Act standards.

With regard to mass wasting and debris avalanches, such events normally occur on slopes over 66 percent (66%). Most of the slopes in the harvest area are less than 66%. The use of a cable system should minimize this risk on the short pitches exceeding 66% slope. Harvesting may be suspended during periods of saturated soil conditions to assure there is minimal soil disturbance.

J. EFFECTS ON MINING

There has been considerable past and present mining activity in the Porcupine Creek drainage located approximately 1 mile to the west of the proposed sale. There is no known mining activity in the harvest area itself.

K. MATERIAL SOURCES

Approximately 1,700 feet of new road construction are necessary to access the sale area. Material sources have not yet been identified and are typically identified during road construction along the road course. DNR will consider other land uses when approving material sources.

L. ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Besides generating an estimated \$24,000.00 in royalties to the state, the proposed sales will create economic benefits in Haines and possibly other parts of Alaska. The total economic impact of these sales to the statewide economy is estimated to be \$168,000. The Haines business community will receive direct economic benefits from providing support services for the operators such as fuel, food, housing, medical and miscellaneous supplies. The residents of Haines will receive an indirect benefit through taxes paid to the borough by the operator, the employees, and their families during the course of the timber harvest operations.

The timber sale will have an effect on local employment by generating an estimated two-to-six jobs directly associated with the harvest. The sale is expected to benefit the local economy by providing much needed jobs and possibly forest products for the local forest products industry. The sale of these logs adds potential employment opportunities and economic contributions to the community. This action is not expected to result in starting up the mill or adversely impacting any of the other industries in Haines.

V. **MARKET CONDITIONS**

At present, there is a moderate demand for local forest products. The local market includes domestic sawlogs, houselogs, and firewood. Domestic sawlogs may be sold to local sawmills, as has occurred in the recent past. The export market is poor at the present time but due to the size of this sale, it is likely to go to a local manufacturer. The pulp or chip market is depressed and demand is low and the low-grade logs from this sale are likely to go as firewood. The demand from the local and export markets is expected to remain fair over the length of this proposed contract.

The economic conditions in the general vicinity of this proposed sale are fair. The current local economy is based on logging, fishing, and tourism. The local large sawmill has been closed since April of 1991. Several small mobile dimension sawmills exist in the valley and have purchased most of the smaller sales over the past few years.

VI. **OPTIONS**

After a review of the material and information discussed above, the following alternatives should be considered:

1. To continue the sales as proposed.
2. To modify the sales by making them larger or smaller.

3. Defer the sale offerings.
4. Not offer the sales.

A discussion of the four alternatives follows:

1. This alternative meets the objectives of the Five-Year Schedule of Timber Sales and DNR's constitutional mandate. It also meets the silvicultural objective of improving forest vigor, provides a source of logs for the timber industry, and creates jobs for the local Haines area.
2. The sale size was selected to provide a logical series of small operator sales without having to develop additional roads for each sale. Increasing or decreasing the size of the unit would increase logging costs or leave timber that would be more difficult to harvest in the future. This sale is of an adequate size to cover the costs to construct the new roads and cover the mobilization costs to operate from the area road system. This sale area was designed to balance and maintain other resource values as well as provide economic benefits to the Haines Area.
3. Deferring harvest to a later date would fail to meet many of the objectives of the sale. One of the main objectives is to make state-owned timber consistently available to the local timber industry.
4. This alternative would result in not meeting any of the objectives outlined for this management action. Utilization of the forest resource would not be achieved and there would be no contribution to the state and local economy, and there would be no restoration of forest health. Regeneration in the proposed sale area would be delayed.

VII. **ACMP CONSISTENCY ANALYSIS**

This area is not within a district coastal program, and is therefore subject to statewide standards (6 AAC 80). There are no known geophysical hazards or areas of historic or archaeological importance within the proposed sale area. Recreational and subsistence use of the area is low; no seafood processing is designated to occur in this area; there is no grazing or agriculture use of the area. Therefore, the sale does not conflict with the standards on geophysical hazards; historic, prehistoric, and archaeological resources; fish and seafood processing; subsistence and recreation; agricultural use.

This offering is consistent with the habitat standard because the Forest Practices Regulations preempt the habitat standards enacted under AS 46.40.

In addition, the sale does not cause an impediment to existing or future transportation or utility corridors, and is therefore consistent with that standard.

Laws and regulations regarding timber harvesting and the quality of air, land and water will apply, ensuring consistency.

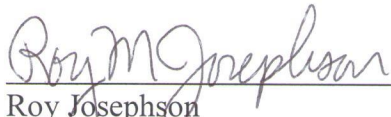
VIII. PRELIMINARY FINDING AND DECISION

The purpose of this decision is to determine if the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry, shall make available timber located in portions of Section 26, T28S, R54E, Copper River Meridian.

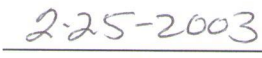
After due consideration of all pertinent information and alternatives, I have reached the following Preliminary Decision: To offer the sales as proposed in alternative 1.

In addition, I find that this preliminary decision satisfies the objective as stated in this document and it is in the best interest of the state to proceed with this action.

This decision also contains DNR's consistency analysis. DNR believes that this action is consistent with the Alaska Coastal Management Program.



Roy Josephson
Northern Southeast Area Forester



Date

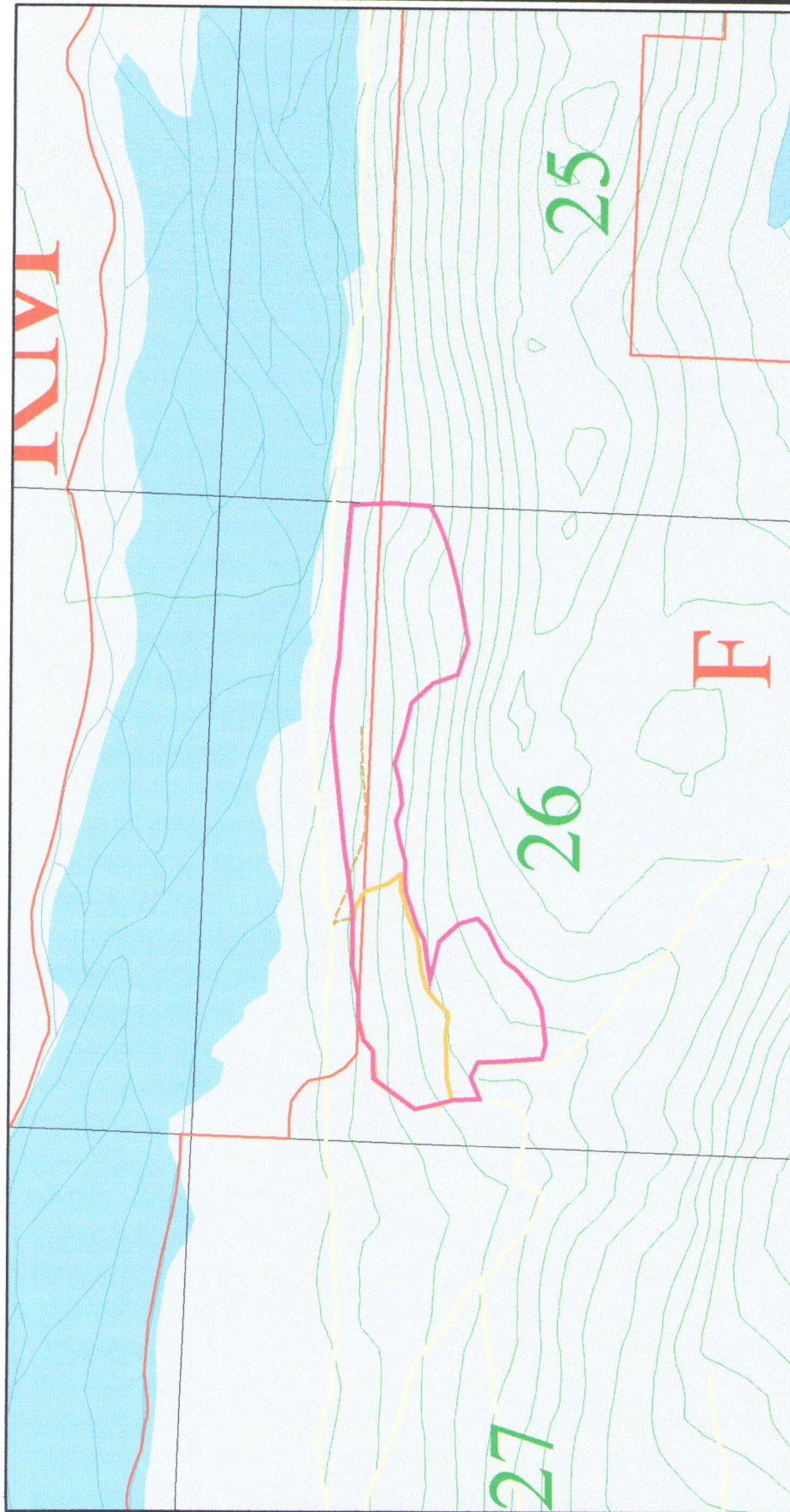
HAINES STATE FOREST

West Herman Timber Sale Area

Vicinity Map



HAINES STATE FOREST WEST HERMAN TIMBER SALE Sale Area Map



Map Legend

- Harvest Area
- Spur Road Construction
- West Herman 1 - Harvest Unit
- Management Unit Bdry
- Main Secondary Rds
- Lakes/Rivers/Streams
- Section Line
- Contour Line

West Herman Timber Sale Area
Harvest Units I-IV

0 325 650 1,300 1,950 2,600 3,250 3,900 4,550 5,200 Feet

1 inch equals 1,320 feet

T28S R54E Section 26 CRM

Created by: GJP
2/26/03
SOA - Division of Forestry
Haines, Alaska